

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Spanish Fork Junior High School
600 South 820 East
Spanish Fork, Utah 84660**

April 7-8, 2004



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
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**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Spanish Fork Junior High School
600 South 820 East
Spanish Fork, Utah 84660**

April 7-8, 2004

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

**Patrick Ogden
Interim State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate in-service growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 7-8, 2004, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Spanish Fork Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Carl Swenson is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Spanish Fork Junior High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Spanish Fork Junior High School.

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10/30/03

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J. Lynn Jones.....	Coordinator Federal Programs
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Al Mosher	Director Human Resources
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Lynn Patterson	Supervisor Transportation
Chris Sorensen	Director Elementary Education
Bill Vest	Supervisor School Foods
Robert K. Wadley	Director Secondary Education
Scott Wilson.....	Coordinator, Pupil Special Services

SPANISH FORK JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRTION AND STAFF

Administration

Carl Swenson Principal
John DeGraffenreid..... Assistant Principal

Counseling

Cheryl Brown..... Counselor
Ross Harrison..... Counselor
Todd Jackson Counselor
Galen Downing..... Psychologist

Support Staff

District Personnel
Suzanne Livingston
Eileen Lund
Michele Lundell
Jamie Richards
Luci Richey
Leslie Huish

Para-Educators

Amy Anson
Julie Cole
Susan Fay
Heidi Frandsen
Julie Green
Tani Griffin
Lesley Johnson
Karla Peterson
Jana Russell

Brooks Ward
Tracy Warenski
Diane Young

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Ann Braithwaite
Denise Bufton
Chris Hall
Sandra Jorgensen
Judy Walton

Custodians

Ron Holt, Head
Craig Draper, Asst Head
George Bradford
Brandon Catumull
Gavin Gordon
Ruby Hansen

Alisha Hatfred
Jared Johns
Jill Talbot

Lunch Workers

Glenda Bringhurst,
Manager
Angie Allphin
Nancy Balzly
Lori Catmull
Rita Davis
Lisa Farr
Ruth Gardner
Carol Mason
Gina Patterson
Donna Woodland

Faculty

John Allan
James Anderson
Joe Anson

Sara Atuaia
Dwayne Bass
Jeff Baumann

Claudine Benson
Maureen Betts
DeeAnn Binks

David Boyack
Laura Carter
Jay Cornaby
Dustion Cox
Sandy Coxson
Richard Daniels
Katrina Davenport
Margie Dobson
Jill Elliot
Jill Farmer
Eric Ferrin
J. Merrill Hallam
Julie Hallberg
Angela Harman
Josh Hill

Kristina Holley
James Hubbard
David Huff
Richard Huff
Alan Jacob
Janet Jensen
Jodi Knoebell
Russell LeMmon
Brent Loveless
Tara Lundell
Tiersa Marcov
Annalee Miner
Brian Moser
Jeff Nelson
Paul Nelson

Elaine Peterson
Jennifer Pyper
Sariah Reese
Jesse Roberts
Michelle Rhoades
Sunny Robinson
Heidi Smith
Amy Spencer
Kasee Sweat
Talia Terry
Richard Trimble
Leslie Walker
Nathan Whitney
Angela Wilson

SPANISH FORK JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Spanish Fork Junior High School is committed to excellence in academic, technology, physical and social education that develops a caring student.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Students are individuals.
- This school will strive for continual improvement for each student.
- Parental support and involvement is critical to the success of the student.
- Students are responsible for their actions and decisions, physically, academically, and socially.
- This school will help each student to reach their full potential.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Verneita R. Hunt, Cottonwood Elementary, Granite School District,
Visiting Team Chairperson

Michael Goodman, Mount Jordan Middle School, Jordan School District

Glen Bailey, Canyon View Junior High School, Alpine School District

Carolyn Bushman, Wendover High School, Tooele School District

Georgia Loutensock, Utah State Office of Education

VISITING TEAM REPORT

SPANISH FORK JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Established in 1925, Spanish Fork Junior High School was located at two previous sites before it took up its current residence at 820 East 600 South, about two miles west of the mouth of Spanish Fork Canyon. Each morning the brisk winds clear the air for the students coming from the communities of Spanish Fork, Salem, Woodland Hills, Palmyra, Lake Shore, Benjamin, Thistle, and Birdseye. Currently these students are fed to the school by way of Spanish Fork Middle School. After their two-year stay, they will continue their educational path through Spanish Fork High School.

Since this building's construction in 1976, Spanish Fork Junior has undergone several changes. Originally constructed as an intermediate school, housing sixth through ninth grades, the building's physical layout separated the students: Sixth and seventh grade classes were located on the north side of the building, eight and ninth on the south. At the time, the classrooms operated openly, without many walls. The administrative offices held everything together at the center of the school. Outside hallways were constructed in 1990. A separate middle school was built in 1997, taking the sixth and seventh graders away. Extensive remodeling occurred in 2001, whereby the administrative and counseling offices were relocated to the north of the building; a new media center, faculty room, and additional classrooms were also constructed.

With the physical structure of the building constantly changing, the organizational structure remains intact. Departments work independently as well as collaboratively in order to align curricula, discuss goals, share strategies, and complete department business.

The school houses 639 eighth graders and 614 ninth graders, for a total of 1,254 students; 91.3 percent are Caucasian, 0.6 percent are Asian, 1.0 percent are African-American, 5.8 percent are Hispanic, 0.6 percent are Native American, and 0.7 percent are Pacific Islander. There are 53 teachers, three counselors, a psychologist, a principal, an assistant principal, and 35 staff members. Other Spanish Fork Junior High School statistics include the school's one percent English as a Second Language students, 21 percent gifted and talented, and 11 percent special education; 18 percent of students receive fee waivers, 8 percent free and reduced-price lunch, and 44 percent are bused to school. Community demographics include a Spanish Fork and surrounding area population of 20,246, and a Salem population of 4,327; the median income is \$45,833, and the average family size is 3.86 people. The top five employers in the county are Brigham Young University, Alpine School District, Utah Valley State College, IHC Health Care Services, and Nebo School District.

Nebo School District is currently the fastest growing district in the state. The rate is expected to double in the next twenty years. A special bond election in February 2004 calls for funds to build two new high schools, one junior high, and seven new elementary schools in order to accommodate such rapid expansion. These schools should be completed by 2010, and will no doubt affect the demographics of Spanish Fork Junior High. The growth, however, will not affect the school's tradition of academic excellence.

There are some unique features about Spanish Fork Junior High. The school boasts the largest class size of any secondary school in the state, at thirty pupils per classroom. On the other hand, Spanish Fork Junior High School also spends the least per student. Seventeen of the fifty teachers (34 percent) are in their first or second year of teaching. One of the school's strong points is the availability of technology. Five complete computer labs are available for student and teacher use, with other computers scattered throughout the building. Several teachers have access to large televisions with scan converters to project PowerPoint programs and access the Internet. Even more teachers complete technology training regularly. This training includes "Intel: Teach to the Future," as well as Nebo School District-run programs such as Tools for Teachers and Tools for New Teachers. Also, two alternative programs house themselves within the wall of Spanish Fork Junior High School: the Options program, which is designed for students who present special challenges in the traditional classroom setting; and the Sunrise program, which is the school district's program for emotionally disabled students.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The Visiting Team found the school's profile and analysis to be honest and forthright. The school named areas of strength as well as areas of weakness. Those areas of weakness were adequately addressed in the action plan.

The data collection was extensive and disaggregated. This gave the reader the ability to see who was and was not learning. The document broke down the information into easily understood sections. The analysis of those sections revealed clear areas of future work to be done.

It was evident that many people worked on the committees and provided information for the different departments, focus groups, and data collection sections. Spanish Fork Junior High should be commended for its in-depth study of its school community.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The Visiting Team suggests that Spanish Fork Junior High add a section listing various methods of classroom instruction. Professional development along these lines would help widen the range of instructional practices used with students.

The Visiting Team also suggests that Spanish Fork Junior High reduce the number of goals in the action plan. There are enough things on the school's plate without adding a larger burden than is necessary.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Expand the area of research-based instructional methods through professional development.
- Support the new administration through continuance of the self-study process.
- Give more responsibility to teachers who contributed small amounts of information to the process.
- Get more parents involved. This is a difficult task, but worth the effort.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The Visiting Team found the school community to be heavily engaged in the self-study process. Parents and teachers in all departments took part in developing the profile and working on committees. This is not to say everyone put forth equal effort, but everyone did some small part to help, some contributing more than others.

The Visiting Team found evidence that student achievement was the primary goal of the data collection, discussions, analyses of departments, and goal setting. Comments heard in discussions with teachers, parents, students, and administrators reflect their desire to make student achievement their top priority. As the staff members conducted the activities for the self-study, their focus remained clear. The Visiting Team found that the teachers worked well with each other and involved parents when possible. Many of the teachers did what was expected of them and more.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The Visiting Team found that the school's self-study accurately reflected its current strengths and limitations. The patrons, students, teachers, and administrators were honest about their strong points as well as their weak areas. At the end of the self-study and when their book was being published, the administration and staff found out that the principal would be moved at the end of the current school year to a district position. The principal was forthright about this information shortly after the Visiting Team arrived. This built credibility with the Visiting Team as to other matters throughout the visit.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Spanish Fork Junior High School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

1. A Successful Learner
A successful learner has gained basic knowledge and skills to continue the learning process and to use that ability to understand and make connections throughout life.

A successful learner:

1. Has grade appropriate understanding of core principles of English, history, science, math, and technology.
2. Recognizes connections across-the-curriculum and is able to apply the knowledge to real life experiences.
3. Exhibits confidence and skills necessary for independent discovery.

2. An Effective Communicator
An effective communicator is able to recognize a partnership with school, parents, and the community to be successful in educational goals.

An effective communicator:

1. Understands that communication occurs between two or more individuals.
2. Is aware of sources of information that aid in communication.
3. Is able to use verbal, written, and technical skills to communicate clearly.

3. A Respectful, Caring, and Responsible Citizen
A respectful, caring, and responsible citizen develops understanding by addressing issues through diversity, core curriculum, and connecting classroom lessons to real life.

A respectful, caring and responsible citizen:

1. Treats peers and others with respect and compassion.
 2. Recognizes and appreciates the differences in others.
 3. Uses education as a vehicle to understand the diverse world around them.
4. Resource Literate
- A resource literate person is capable of utilizing available sources to enhance academic, technical, social, physical, and emotional education for a lifetime.
- A resource literate person:
1. Understands how to gather and use information from a variety of sources and is able to express this information verbally and in writing.
 2. Is aware of available resources at Spanish Fork Junior High School designed to teach, encourage, and tutor each student.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

Spanish Fork Junior High School has developed a mission statement that defines the purpose and direction of the school. Most faculty members were involved at some point in the development of the mission statement; however, some classified personnel were not included, and in a few cases were not aware of the mission and beliefs.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The belief statements did not seem to be articulated as well as other parts of the self-study or the DRSLs. The Visiting Team recommends that the school revisit the beliefs to determine their effect on the purpose and direction of the school and consider expanding the beliefs to include all stakeholders.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The DRSLs align very well with the mission and beliefs. Certified staff members, parents, and the student council were involved in the development, editing, and refinement of the DRSLs.

The desired results for student learning have been developed after much input and collaboration by the certified staff. The mission statement and DRSLs are printed

and displayed throughout the school. Teachers and the student council have introduced the DRSLs through various activities, lessons, etc. The members of the Visiting Team were frequently asked, “Are you the DRSL guys?” (The favorite of the team was “DRSL dude.”) Though some students were not able to recite the DRSLs, they knew what they meant and could relate how teachers were incorporating the DRSLs in their classes. One student wrote a “DRSL Rap” that has been used in many activities.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The staff members are conversant with the Utah Core Curriculum for their specific areas. The Utah Life Skills are evident in the school’s DRSLs and are incorporated in instruction within most departments. The curriculum is based on clearly defined standards that reflect worthwhile expectations for student learning.

The Visiting Team observed several classrooms where the core objectives were prominently displayed and used for planning. Some departments have worked collaboratively to design and share curricula. Most teachers collaborate to some extent within and outside their subject areas.

The Curriculum Development Focus Group requested and received unit lesson plans from each teacher. These lesson plans were then evaluated and correlated to the Core Curriculum. The result provided evidence that faculty members were teaching Core Curriculum standards and objectives.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

A deliberate effort has been made to develop curricula that focus on the DRSLs. The teaching staff uses various forms of contact to communicate with each other, as most departments do not have common free time for collaboration. Several members of the staff voiced a desire to expand opportunities for collaboration and cooperative planning. The Visiting Team recommends that the school explore various ways this could be implemented (e.g., early out, late start, common prep periods, professional development days, etc.).

There is an ongoing process in place for evaluating the curriculum; student performance data is used. Teachers individually review and evaluate their curriculum based on data and student performance.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

The teaching staff has designed and implemented a variety of learning experiences to actively engage students, as evidenced by the number of teaching strategies observed during the site visit. The focus group gave each teacher a self-evaluation to determine his or her own particular teaching styles and methods. The teaching staff has participated in professional development on “best practices.”

Instructional time is protected and appropriately allocated to support student learning. Effective classroom management and organizational strategies are used to maximize students’ academically engaged time. A positive learning climate has been established.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The Visiting Team observed a wide variety of teaching strategies being used throughout the school, including multimedia presentations, discussion groups, cooperative learning groups, hands-on activities, guided note-taking, student presentations, etc.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

The professional staff and leadership provide a variety of opportunities that support student learning. Teachers are available before and after school. A tracking program is available to assist low-performing students in following through with class attendance, assignments, and homework. Accommodations for students with IEPs are given to specific teachers for their use in meeting individual needs. After-school classes are offered for students with specific problems, academic and/or behavioral.

The student council periodically provides activities for students during their lunch period. A variety of clubs, athletic programs, science and history fairs, FFA activities, etc., are also available to students.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Spanish Fork Junior High School students have performed well on CRT and SAT testing. There is evidence of cross-curricular assessment. It appears that students understand what is required of them in order to succeed on tests and in the classroom on assignments, quizzes, projects, etc.

It is recommended that the faculty continue to use rubrics, exceptional student work, and other models of student performance so that all the stakeholders (i.e., students, parents, and others) have a clear and concise picture of what good performance looks like.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Assessments designs are clearly defined and effectively communicated to the students. Many teachers displayed the objectives of the class on the board. There is a direct correlation between what is being taught at Spanish Fork Junior High School and the Utah State Core.

The faculty is encouraged to make sure that web pages, disclosure documents, SIS grades, e-mail, and other forms of communication are used to ensure that both parents and students know what is expected of them. The faculty should also continue to be aware of the State Core and consistently assess what are the “big rocks,” or most important concepts, of their curricula.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

There is evidence that those who teach the same subjects collaborate to ensure that teacher assessments are fair and equal for all students.

The Visiting Team observed that many teachers are using assessments and activities other than tests and quizzes to evaluate student performance, such as rubrics, student work, portfolios, displays, role-playing, and modeling.

The faculty is encouraged to continue to use these and other methods to evaluate student work.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

Every teacher, without exception, felt valued and supported by the leadership team. Expectations are high for students, and students enjoy Spanish Fork Junior High School. Teachers love working at the school. Spanish Fork Junior High School is about student learning; from the principal to the custodian, the cooks, and the paraprofessionals, all adults in the building value the students as individuals and love their jobs. Spanish Fork Junior High School appears to be a great place to work.

Expectations are high, and students strive to meet expectations. Students respond to teacher prompts to be on-task. Students are enjoying the DRSLs and not only can recite them, but also describe them and give examples of what they look like in the classroom.

Students know they are important. There are many reward activities for students. Student recognition is a priority at this school.

Staff accomplishments are celebrated in this school. The P.E. Department just received a large grant and has purchased much-needed equipment. Staff members, students, and parents are excited about this program.

The staff is a close-knit group, and this accreditation process has given them the chance to examine themselves as a whole.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

Teachers and staff members feel that they have a say in what goes on at the school. They have a leadership team that listens to their thoughts. One example is the attendance policy at the school. This was a teacher-driven policy; it received buy-in from the past administrative team, and the current team has adopted it and found ways to improve upon it. Adults in the building believe that the leadership team not only hears but also responds to them.

There is also a school-wide discipline program that everyone has bought into. The staff appears to be supportive of the program. Students know the plan, and know the consequences of negative actions.

The departmental and school-wide goals are direct results of the data the school has gathered from the accreditation process and from knowing the student population well.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The school has set goals to find ways to increase communication with parents. All teachers will have web pages by May 2005. The school has a goal of having the online grades updated weekly. One study skills class is already in place, and it appears that others will follow as the need arises.

Spanish Fork Junior High School recognizes that some students need extra teaching support to learn. One of the goals is to develop an effective tutoring program to help students. Another goal is for teachers to use many strategies to reach the diverse learners in the school. Yet a third goal is make the DRSLs a part of teachers' everyday practice. Students throughout the school understand they have already adopted the DRSLs as a part of the business of Spanish Fork Junior High School.

The Visiting Team recommends that the faculty continue to work with teachers to develop many alternative ways for students to be able to show growth and learning in the classrooms. Continue to add alternative forms of assessment for students with diverse learning abilities. Stay with the process of student tutoring. Develop a plan for students who need to have material taught, re-taught, and re-taught again so they can understand.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

It is evident that all decisions align with the beliefs and values of the school. The principal mentioned that the accreditation book should sit on his desk, and when rules are broken, or when prospective teachers and visiting parents want to know that the school is all about, the book should be opened and the information within shared.

Decisions to add a study skills class, to continually support the attendance and discipline programs, and to set goals in student tutoring all reflect on the leadership responding to the needs of students.

The staff recognizes the value of collaboration. The school leadership needs to continue to explore ways to give teachers time to collaborate and discuss student achievement.

It is recommended that departments continue to be involved with the counselors and administrative team in looking at end-of-level testing and continuing to help students be successful in their learning.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLS, and school improvement efforts?*

The PTSA and the student council are supportive of the mission, values, and goals of the school. Teachers support the process, and it appears that everyone is on the same page. The new teachers look around and recognize the need to be a part of the group. Money is spent well at the school. Student achievement is valued and recognized. There are many programs and opportunities for students to be involved in a variety of activities.

Teachers have the materials needed to be successful in the classroom. Teachers enjoy being here. Students credit the school with being a safe and caring environment.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The Visiting Team is very impressed with the amount of parent involvement in the accreditation process. The principal has mentioned many times the value of the PTSA and the amount of support this organization has given the school.

It was noted that parents chaired many of the focus groups. As the Visiting Team met with the focus groups, parents were a big part of the voice and opinion of the group. It quickly became apparent that the parents feel empowered and believe they will play a role in making sure that the action plans resulting from the accreditation process are accomplished.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team observed many incidences of positive and productive working relationships at Spanish Fork Junior High School. Parents who served on the focus groups were enthusiastic about the learning environment and were complimentary and supportive of the teachers and administrators. The classroom visits revealed an overall environment where students are not afraid to express their ideas and risk failure. Teachers are generally excited about the interest and participation of parents at the school, but expressed a desire for a larger number of parents to be actively concerned with their children's education.

The Visiting Team observed evidence of curriculum mapping in the Social Studies and English Departments, as well as cross-curricular planning between the 8th grade history and 8th grade English classes. A school-wide discipline and tardy policy, initiated and developed by the faculty, indicates a high level of cooperation between faculty members and the administration. In an effort to improve students' writing skills throughout the school, all the departments have adopted the Six Traits of Writing.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The school has developed an electronic communications network to communicate school events and classroom requirements and assignments through bulk e-mails. Teachers also communicate with individual parents by e-mail to keep them informed of their student's progress or deficiencies. A new school web site where parents and students may check individual class assignments is in the developmental stage. A monthly newsletter and biweekly progress reports are sent home with each student so that all parents, even those who do not have computer access, have ample opportunity to be informed of their student's work. Spanish Fork Junior High School has an active and involved PTSA and Community Council.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Thirty-three percent of the teaching staff at Spanish Fork Junior High has been teaching less than four years. This is not a detriment to the school, because these teachers have shown a desire to learn new strategies and are not reluctant to experiment with new ideas. Of the 59 certified staff members, 16 have advanced degrees and five are currently working on advanced degrees. Six teachers are ESL-endorsed, and several teachers are working on curriculum-specific endorsements.

Many of the teachers do not have a planning period, and there is no common planning time in the departments. Teachers plan with each other before and after school and by e-mail.

The school and district administrations provide in-service training opportunities throughout the school year, and the district provides substitutes for teachers to participate in at least one in-service or workshop each year. Much of the school-initiated in-service has been in technology and Internet training to help teachers create their personal class web site to facilitate student/parent and teacher communication.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The Visiting Team observed a commitment among the faculty, administration, PTSA, and Community Council to facilitating the school DRSLs and school improvement goals. Students are well aware of the school DRSLs, and a large number of students have been involved in teaching and emphasizing the DRSLs to the general student body. The department chairpersons are enthusiastic about the work that has been done in the self-study, and are adamant in their commitment to implement the school goals for continuous improvement. This enthusiasm is reflected in the willingness of all the shareholders to self-evaluate, accept the self-study as valid, and move from this base line to making steady improvement in the school for the benefit of all students. The Visiting Team recommends that steps be taken to explore creative methods of providing common departmental planning time to implement school goals within the curriculum and evaluate progress and improvement strategies.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

This chapter does not apply to Spanish Fork Junior High School. Most public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by the USOE—it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The Visiting Team found the Spanish Fork Junior High School Action Plan was a direct result of analyses of school data and the departmental and focus groups' reports. The administration, teachers, staff, students, and parents were very honest in the assessment of their strong and weak areas. As a whole, the faculty is very devoted to student achievement and committed to making changes that will positively affect achievement; this is reflected in the action plan.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

Commitment is very strong for implementing the action plan; as one teacher (reflective of others) noted emphatically, “This process will continue because, honestly, I don’t want to start from scratch again.” The department chairs and administration were very determined about looking at data annually, following action steps, and making new goals as old ones are completed.

- d) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The follow-up process is in place; however, the Visiting Team suggests that Spanish Fork Junior High consider reducing the number of goals in the action plan or prioritizing the goals for more effective implementation. The monitoring plan is ambitious and has the potential to overburden those responsible for multiple aspects (e.g., the principal, accreditation chairperson, etc.). This could prove an especially daunting task for a new administrator that has not been part of the self-study process at Spanish Fork Junior High.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the administration, teachers, staff, students, and community for their extensive and honest look at themselves through the accreditation self-study process. The broad involvement of parents and students in the accreditation process is especially commendable. The Visiting Team was particularly impressed that parents served as chairs for most of the focus groups. The self-study document, with the school profile, department and focus group analyses, action plan, and other information, was created with a collaborative, cooperative spirit, and is concise, well-written, and enlightening.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration for creating a positive, safe, and trusting learning environment for teachers as well as students. The Visiting Team also commends the teachers for their leadership in creating a school-wide discipline program that helps maintain a safe educational climate.
- The Visiting Team commends the parents and students for their involvement in the accreditation process and their continual support of school programs. The parental support shown through the Community Council, PTSA, and other groups is a vital part of students’ education, and Spanish Fork Junior High School is very fortunate to have the desirable composition of involved parents and community members. There is a great deal of respect between parents and school staff members that positively influences all students.

- The Visiting Team commends the students for their commitment to Spanish Fork Junior High School, as demonstrated through respectful, caring, and responsible citizenship in the school and community.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the new administration continue to support the self-study process each year, and expand the involvement of people to include teachers and classified staff members who have been minimally involved so far. Collect and analyze data that is generated yearly, and continue updating the action plan to meet the needs of the student population. Use the School Improvement Plan Document as a living, breathing guide for student improvement.
- The Visiting Team recommends professional development in the areas of Utah State Core Curriculum, various assessment methods, research-based best instructional practices, and using data to increase student achievement. Particular attention should be given to using data and multiple learning strategies to reach low-achieving students.
- The Visiting Team recognizes that some collaboration exists within the school, and recommends that collaboration methodically expand, intra-departmentally and interdepartmentally. The administration and faculty are encouraged to explore options that allow time for collaborative planning.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Spanish Fork Junior High School continue to support the school's high level of effective parent involvement. The school leadership and staff have built a quality working relationship with parents that adds to the positive educational atmosphere for students.